

CHAIRING DISRUPTION MEETINGS

to begin the process of understanding why the placement (or introductions) could not proceed and to inform future planning for the child/ren, the carers or adopters.

Regulations & Timescales

Adoption Regulations require a disruption meeting to be held when a placement fails during the introductions, between the placement and an adoption order being made and within one year of the order.

It is a Fostering Service recommendation that a disruption meeting be held to consider the on going suitability of a carer and to assist placement planning for the child

It is important that a Disruption meeting is held within 6 weeks of introductions or a placement ending. This is to ensure that support is in place for all concerned and to facilitate future planning.

A Disruption meeting should be chaired by someone independent of case planning, usually an Independent Reviewing Officer or Team Manager. Where the placement is an interagency adoption placement the Chair of a disruption meeting should be from a third agency, and arrangements between the child's agency and the adopter's agency should be made to cover the costs involved.

Purpose of the Meeting

- The Chair should reflect on the apparent causes of the placement breakdown and what implications this may have for a child's future plan and placement. The Chair will make a recommendation about this.
- The Chair should consider whether the carers or adopters are still suitable and indicate any training issues that need to be put in place.
- The Chair should make a recommendation about the future use of carers or adopters. This will then be taken to the relevant panel.

Preventing disruption

- When any of the parties to a placement becomes aware of any risk to the stability of the placement, an urgent *review meeting* should be convened.
- The purpose of this meeting to generate solutions; but where the conclusion has already been reached that it would be better for the child to move, such a meeting can be used to plan the support arrangements required.
- A disruption meeting is held post placement to reflect on the causes.

A disrupted placement for a child and for carers is life changing

They have the right to see the minutes in the future.

They deserve to have written information about the reasons in order to make sense of what happened in order to promote their emotional health.

Not knowing or understanding is damaging.

Not liking the reason is different.

Gathering the Information

- Somebody famous once said “nothing is relevant and everything is relevant”
- How can we begin to sift through the files to comprehend the whole picture;
 - volumes of children’ files
 - foster carer’s files
 - adopter’s files

Lets go back a few steps !

- Prior to any new placement, social workers have a duty to make *a risk assessment* based on historical information about a child - to ensure the safety of the child and all members of the family, post placement.
- When making the placement, the family's *safe caring document* should be updated to include any changes required to keep everyone safe.
- Start with the Safe Caring Document

Some Other Key documents

- The needs of the child (*CPR, or equivalent*)
- The approval of the carers (*PAR or Form F and panel minutes*)
- The matching or Placement report
- Minutes from a Life Appreciation Meeting
- The Planning Meeting
- Review meetings

- The returned questionnaire

The questionnaire

- The questionnaire is sent out to all involved. It is important to include staff who had past involvement but are no longer case holders and to other professionals.
- The questionnaire is sent from the chair of the meeting with a required date for return prior to the meeting.
- It enables everyone to contribute their views without attending a potentially distressing meeting.
- Reduces the time required for the meeting
- Ensures timescales are met
- Provides evidence for the future

The Meeting

- The meeting should be minuted and take place in a pleasant environment and with adequate time allowed for the expression of feelings as well as the factual details. The Chair may decide to give time slots if there is conflict between parties.
- Everyone should feel supported and can bring a “friend”. However, they cannot participate or represent (in the event that it is a legal representative)
- Children’s views are important and should be recorded. Children should be assisted to attend (if appropriate) or to send a child friendly response.

Chairing the meeting

- Be prepared, make sure you have read key documents and all the returned questionnaires.
- In advance, make a time line of significant events, it can be very revealing, **especially contact arrangements and goodbye visits.**
- Start with the child's needs
- The approval of the carers/adopters
- The matching process
- The introductions
- The difficulties and how they were addressed
- Events leading to the point of no return

Chairing the meeting cont.

- Explore attachments.
- What adjustments were made or not made to accommodate an extra member of the family?
- What did the placement trigger from the carer's past history?
- What did the placement trigger from the child's past history?
- How was the child prepared for the move?
- Was the plan of introductions changed?
- Were visits and reviews held to timescales?

Summarizing the key issues at the end of the meeting

- To gather the evidence, it is a good idea to make some of your own notes and ring or highlight key issues for reference when summing up
- Identify the key stages of the placement breakdown
- List the causes
- List the supports in place and highlight any gaps.
- Share the summary in a mindful manner
- Thank those attending
- List the practice issues to inform the recommendations
- Consider and note any changes to procedures so that staff can learn from the process and make recommendations to Senior managers.

Making the recommendations

- This should be a short section of the report.
- If the summary reflects the causes of the placement breakdown, the recommendations will flow.
- The Chair should indicate who should have full minutes and who should have a summary and recommendations only.
N.B. Personal information relating to carers or to adopters should not be shared.
- The Chair should clarify what and how any information can be shared with the child.

A disruption meeting following allegations

- Sometimes an investigation is inconclusive and carers or adopters may wish to foster or adopt other children.
- Their suitability to continue to foster or to adopt must be considered by the relevant panel and the carers or adopters will have the right to a qualifying determination and access to the IRM.
- The disruption meeting minutes are crucial to this process and will therefore be made available to the carers or adopters.

Finally

- The Chair will see and approve the content of the minutes
- The Chair will record who can see full minutes and who can see the summary and or recommendations
- Remember that openness is required, think of the young person reading the minutes in the future
- Be mindful also of the possibility of future complaints, IRM or freedom of info requests
- Ensure that a named Senior Manager is aware of any recommended changes to practice or to policy as a result of lessons learned from the disruption meeting